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Preliminary Observations on the Gods in Thucydides' Work

These observations "repeat," i.e., modify, some observations which I have made in the Thucydides-chapter of *The City and Man*. No necessary purpose would be served by stressing the differences between the first and the second statements.

For Thucydides the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians was, as he expected from the beginning, the most noteworthy motion—so to speak, the greatest motion of all times which affected all human beings. He gives a two-fold proof of his contention. The first and by far the most extensive (I.1–19) proves it by laying bare the weakness of the ancients and therewith the strength, the surpassing strength, of the men, especially the Greeks, of the present. Apart from a seemingly casual reference to the Delian Apollon (13.6), the first proof is silent regarding gods; this silence seems to be connected with the fact that the most famous speakers about antiquity are the poets, and the poets are in the habit of adorning their subjects by magnifying them (10.3): tracing happenings to the gods means precisely adorning the happenings by magnifying them. The second proof concentrates on the greatness of the sufferings brought on by the Peloponnesian War as contrasted especially with the sufferings due to the Persian War (23.1–3). Thucydides tacitly distinguishes the sufferings which human beings inflicted upon one another and those which were inflicted upon them by earthquakes, eclipses of the sun, drought, famine, and last but not least the plague. Following the guidance supplied by Thucydides' Perikles addressing the Athenians, we may call the second kind of happening or suffering "daimonic" (II.64.2), leaving it open whether the word

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always signifies, within the work, happenings of non-human or super-human origin (such as omens) or whether it is best understood as synonymous with "natural."

Let us then turn to Perikles' speeches or, more generally, let us consider a possible difference between Thucydides' narrative of the deeds on the one hand and the speeches of his characters concerning our subject on the other. In Book One he speaks in his narrative of the god in Delphi, of oracles, temples, and so on without making it clear whether he accepts or reveres them in the same manner as so to speak everyone else did. On the other hand, the first pair of speeches—those of the Korkyraians and the Korinthians in Athens (I.32–43)—contain no reference whatever to gods or to sacred things. (The same is true of the brief exchange between the Korinthian embassy and the Athenians in 53.2–9.) The situation is somewhat more complex and revealing in the four speeches delivered in Sparta by the Korinthians, the Spartan king Archidamos, and the ephor Sthenolaidas (68–86). The Korinthians, the accusers par excellence of the Athenians, appeal more emphatically to the gods who watch over the performance of oaths than the other speakers. The only speaker here who is completely silent on the gods is Archidamos, the only speaker here whom Thucydides singles out here by an explicit, if somewhat qualified, praise. In the next assembly of the Peloponnesians which again takes place in Sparta, there occurs only a single speech; in that speech the Korinthians refer to the oracle of the god (123.1). There follows a narrative of the final exchanges which deal chiefly with mutual recriminations regarding pollutions contracted by the two sides concerning gods; Thucydides abstains from judging on the merits of the two cases; he merely notes that the Spartans held their polluting action to be responsible for the great earthquake that happened in Sparta (128.1). Thucydides' account of the final fate of the Spartan and of the Athenian leaders in the Persian War—King Pausanias and Themistokles—contains literal quotations from the letters by the two men to the king of Persia, i.e., something approaching speeches by Thucydidean characters; those quotations contain no references to gods. On the other hand, the god in Delphi had a weighty word to say about the fitting burial of the Spartan king, traitor though he was (134.4).

We are now prepared for considering the next speeches, the Periklean speeches. There are altogether three such speeches (I.140–44, II.35–46 and 60–64). Perikles is, just like Archidamos, completely silent on the gods; only once in the Funeral Speech (38.1) does he refer to sacrifices. Archidamos remains for the time being unchanged. Before the first invasion of Attika he addresses a speech to the supreme commanders of the Peloponnesian troops without ever referring to the gods (II.11). Yet in a Periklean speech addressed to the Athenian Assembly which Thucydides reports without claiming to quote it, he makes that outstanding leader speak of "the

goddess," meaning thereby the most valuable statue of Athena, for he is setting forth there in detail the financial resources of the city (13.5). On the other hand, Thucydides has to say quite a few things about gods and sacred matters in his narrative of the plague which follows immediately on Perikles' Funeral Speech, to say nothing of his narrative about early Athens (15.2–6).

The first exchange of speeches after Perikles' last speech concerns the conflict between the Spartans and the Plataians, who were allies of the Athenians. The exchange is based on a solemn oath still binding the two (or three) parties to the conflict. It is particularly worthy of note that the Spartan king Archidamos begins his final reply to the Plataians by calling on the gods and heroes who possess the Plataian land—to be witnesses to the justice of the Peloponnesian cause (79.2)—a justice which the reader might find rather dubious: the moral-political situation has undergone a profound change since the debate in Sparta.

We learn from Thucydides' narrative that after a victorious naval battle against the Peloponnesians the Athenians consecrated a captured enemy ship to Poseidon (84.4). In the ensuing speech of the Peloponnesian naval commanders to their troops, who were understandably disheartened by their preceding defeat caused by their insufficient naval training or experience, no reference is made to the gods (87). Yet the Athenian soldiers were also afraid: the Peloponnesian ships were more numerous than the Athenian ones. The Athenian commander Phormion restored their courage by a speech which is likewise silent regarding gods (88–89). In the second naval battle the Peloponnesians fought better than in the first but the final result was again a complete Athenian victory: experience and skill were again decisive. Toward the end of Book Two Thucydides tells a story, without vouching for its truth, about Alkmaion, matricide, who, thanks to Apollon's oracle, found a safe refuge in a district which did not yet exist at the time of the murder (102.5–6).

The next speech is the one which the Mytilenian ambassadors address to the gathering of the Peloponnesians and neutrals at Olympia in order to solicit help for their intended defection from the Athenian allies; the Mytilenians are compelled to show that their intended action is not unjust or ignoble (III.9–14). Toward the end of their speech they admonish their would-be new allies to be awed by the respect in which those would-be allies are held by the hopes of the Greeks and by the respect of the Olympian Zeus in whose temple they appear, as it were as suppliants. As Thucydides shows by his narrative, the Mytilenians' request and in particular the last-minute appeal to the Olympian Zeus remained without effect. He does not give a speech of reply. The reply is given by deed or to some extent by the two speeches exchanged in the Athenian Assembly after the Athenians' conquest of Mytilene. Prior to the actual conquest of Mytilene the Peloponnesian comander Teutiaplos of Elis addresses to his troops a brief speech which

is, according to Gomme (*ad loc.*), the only one prefaced by *tade*, instead of the usual *toiade* (29–30). (One might add that after having quoted the brief speech, Thucydides notes that Teutiaplos had said *tosauta*—an expression which he uses quite frequently.) Teutiaplos' counsel was rejected by his Spartan fellow-commander Alkidas, obviously a stupid man who thus contributed to the failure of the Peloponnesian enterprise. In a meeting of the Athenian Assembly which takes place after the conquest of Mytilene Kleon passionately opposes the reconsideration of the capital punishment of all grown-up male Mytilenians—of a punishment resolved upon a few days earlier: the Mytilenians are simply guilty of an inexcusable injustice and must be dealt with accordingly. Kleon does not refer to the gods: he has no reason to refer in any way to the gods (37–40). The case for gentleness or rather for discrimination is made by Diodotos, who had already stated it in the preceding meeting of the Assembly (42–48); his speech is perhaps the most enigmatic speech in the whole work. Diodotos is likewise completely silent on the gods. But it is possibly not inappropriate to note that he speaks of the weakness of the passionately excited "human nature" as compared with "the force of laws or anything else awful" (45.7; cf. 84.2). Partly thanks to Diodotos' intervention the majority of the Mytilenians had a hair's-breadth escape.

Seen within the context of the whole, the fate of Mytilene and the speeches accompanying it are the foil of the fate of Plataiai at the hands of the Peloponnesians—an event illumined likewise by an exchange of speeches. The Plataians are eventually compelled to surrender their starved city to the Spartans, who accept the surrender with a reservation which, to me at least, is not a model of good faith. The Plataians know of course that the Spartans will give in to the demands of the Thebans, the Plataians' deadly enemies, but they make the manly effort to remind the Spartans of what the Spartans would have to do as good men. They naturally appeal to the gods, who in the Persian War consecrated the anti-Persian alliance in which the Plataians distinguished themselves. They remind the Spartans of the sacred duty incumbent upon the latter to respect the graves, always honored by the Plataians, of the Spartans' fathers who had fallen in the Persian War and had been buried in Plataian ground. They invoke the gods whom the Greeks worship on the same altars in order to persuade the Spartans not to give in to the Thebans' demand (53.5–9). The Thebans' hard and hateful reply is meant to show that the Plataians have always been unjust (61–67): hence the Thebans are completely silent about the gods (IV.67.1); as the Thebans imply, the Plataians' pious invocations do not deserve an answer.

The narration of the fate of Mytilene and of that of Plataiai prepares us sufficiently for Thucydides' account of the rising of the *demos* in Korkyra

and of the fratricidal wars between the mighty and the *demos* in the cities in general. Cruel hatred took the place of friendship to the nearest of kin, led to complete disregard of the sanctity of asylum in the temples and to utter disregard of "the divine law": partnership in crime rather than respect for the divine law became the bond of good faith. Thucydides does not explain what the precise ground of the divine law is nor what its specific prohibitions (or commands) are, but he leaves no doubt that the partisans on both sides lost all piety (82.6–7).

When Thucydides, compelled or excused by the sequence of events, comes to speak of the first Athenian expedition against Sicily, he speaks first of a number of daimonic things, one of them a small volcano near Sicily; in the opinion of the local people the outbreaks are due directly to Hephaistos (87–88). Immediately thereafter he speaks at somewhat greater length than before of earthquakes, this time giving his own opinion about a related event; his own opinion contains no reference to gods (89). The Spartans on the other hand ask the god at Delphi regarding the foundation of a city; the god approves of the plan properly modified; although the modifications are accepted by the god, the foundation is not successful, not the least owing to the ineptitude of the Spartan magistrate (92.5–93). Shortly thereafter Thucydides avails himself of the opportunity to mention the violent death of Hesiod in the temple of the Zeus of Nemea: he had received in Nemea an oracle to the effect that this would happen to him there but Thucydides does not vouch for the truth of the story (96.1). Thucydides would have misled us greatly about Athens and hence about the Peloponnesian War if he had not added soon thereafter his account of the Athenians' purification of Apollon's island of Delos, the purification having been ordered by "some oracle or other." The truth about the original form of the Delian festival is vouched for by no less a man than Homer himself (104).

The end of the first part of the war is decisively prepared by the Athenian victory, due primarily to Demosthenes at Pylos (or Sphakteria), and by Brasidas' victorious march to Thrace. Near the beginning of the section Demosthenes addresses the hoplites under his command. In the situation, which is rather grave, not to say desperate, he urges them to be of good hope and not to be too greatly concerned with the calculation of chances. He does not mention gods (IV.9–10). His tactics prove to be highly successful. The Spartans are now willing to conclude an armistice and even a peace treaty in order to get back the Spartiates cut off by the Athenians and send ambassadors to Athens. In their speech to the Athenian Assembly those ambassadors go so far as to leave it open whether the Spartans or the Athenians started the war, i.e., broke the treaty (IV.17–20); they naturally do not mention any god: Apollon had promised to come to the Peloponnesians' help called or uncalled (I.118.3, II.54.4). Thanks chiefly to Kleon the

Athenians win a splendid victory. Nothing is said by anyone to the effect that the Spartans had asked for or received permission from the oracle to send ambassadors to Athens.

Before turning to Brasidas' expedition, Thucydides speaks of three actions which are particularly noteworthy with a view to our present purpose. The first is the pan-Sicilian gathering at Gela, which has at its high point the speech of Hermokrates that he quotes (IV.58–64). He warns his fellow-Sicilians of the danger threatening them at the hands of the Athenians: the Athenians intend to come to Sicily, not in order to help their Ionian kinsmen against the Dorians but in order to acquire the wealth of the whole of Sicily. He does not blame the Athenians for their desire, which belongs to human nature universally. He is completely silent about the gods, thus silently anticipating the argument of the Athenians on Melos. The second action is Brasidas' winning over the Akanthians, allies of Athens, to Sparta by a clever speech (IV.85–87). He presents the Spartans as the liberators of the Greeks from servitude to Athens and he disposes of any fear which the Akanthians might feel that the Spartans might misuse their victory, telling his audience that he has received from the Spartans' rulers the most solemn oaths to the desired effect: what stronger proof of Spartan good faith could be given? In addition, he counters a possible Akanthian argument that the Spartans have no right to liberate the Akanthians from the Athenians by force, by calling as witnesses the gods and heroes of the Akanthians' land: to force the Akanthians to be free and to contribute their share towards the liberation of Greece as a whole by the use of force for this purpose is not unjust. The third action is the Athenians' occupation and fortification of the Delion, a temple of Apollon near the border of Boiotia and Attika. The Boiotian leader Pagondas delivers a speech to his troops in which he tells them that the god whose temple the Athenians have lawlessly occupied will be on the side of the Boiotians and that the sacrifices which the Boiotians have offered are favorable (IV.92). The Athenian commander Hippokrates in his address to his troops is completely silent on gods and sacred things (IV.95): we could not expect differently. The battle ends of course with a very severe Athenian defeat. The impious actions of the Athenians, which consisted in fortifying, and living in, the sanctuary, enable the Boiotians, as they think, to demand from the Athenians the evacuation of the temple before they can claim the surrender of their dead. In the ensuing debate the Athenians claim that their allegedly impious action would be forgiven as an involuntary action even by the god (98.6).

When Brasidas comes to Toronte, he arranges there a meeting of the citizens, to whom he says things similar to those he had said to the Akanthians (114.3–5) but his speech to the Toronaians is only reported, not quoted. Thucydides did not need a further proof of Brasidas' rhetorical ability. In addition, Brasidas' action in Akanthos had established his credit

among Athens' vacillating allies sufficiently. Finally, we cannot exclude the possibility that the Spartan authorities did not entirely approve of Brasidas' making solemn promises in their name (108.7; cf. 132.3). In the report of the speech to the Toronaians there naturally occurs no reference to the gods. Let us remind ourselves here of two earlier parallels. In I.72–78 Thucydides first reports and then quotes the speech of the Athenians in Sparta: gods are not mentioned in the report but they are mentioned in the quoted speech; the result is that of the four speeches delivered on the occasion only Archidamos' speech is silent about the gods. In II.88–89 Thucydides first reports and then quotes Phormion's speech to the Athenian troops; but Phormion, in contradistinction to the Peloponnesian commanders, does not reinforce his speech by threats of punishment (II.87.9).

As a consequence of Brasidas' successes the Spartans and the Athenians conclude an armistice. The first article of the armistice concerns the sanctuary and the oracle of the Pythian Apollon (IV.118.1–3). The same order is observed in the solemnly sworn so-called peace of Nikias (V.17end–18.2).

Book V opens with Thucydides' account of the correction by the Athenians of a neglect of which they had become guilty when they purified Delos. There soon follows the battle of Amphipolis with Brasidas in command of the Peloponnesians and their allies and Kleon in command of the Athenians; the battle leads to a severe defeat of the Athenians; the leaders of both armies are killed. Before the battle Brasidas addresses his speech, quoted by Thucydides, to his troops without referring to gods or sacred things (cf. also 10.5); on the other hand, he prepares a sacrifice to Athena (10.2). We note that no speech of Kleon is reported, let alone quoted. Kleon is too busy with "seeing," with observing the movement of Brasidas' army, to speak (7.3–4, 9.3, 10.2): a strange reversal of doings as between a Spartan and the then leading Athenian demagogue, a kind of comic equivalent to the fighting at Pylos. The citizens of Amphipolis honor Brasidas after his death with the honors of a hero. The death of the two commanders increased the influence of those leading men in Sparta and Athens who favor peace. To bring about this result in Sparta, the cooperation of the priestess in Delphi was important. This does not necessarily contradict Apollon's promise at the beginning of the war that he would come to the help of the Spartans called or uncalled, for the only oracle regarding the war which proved to be true concerned the war's lasting 27 years (V.26.3): the god had not promised that the Spartans would be victorious in "the first war." This is to say nothing of the fact that the armistice or peace was at that time a great help for Sparta.

Between Brasidas' last speech (9) and the dialogue on Melos at the end of V (84ff.) there occur no quoted speeches but only a few reported speeches or references to them. But in that twilight there occur mentions of gods and divine things, among which one may count earthquakes (45.4, 50.5), and of unfavorable sacrifices as causes why the Spartans broke off military opera-

tions (54.2, 55.3, 116.1). But the Athenians too of course obeyed the oracle of the Delphic god (32.1). Above all, Thucydides makes clear that the Spartans' flute playing prior to battle was not done "for the sake of the divine" (70).

It is easy for us to find that the references to "the divine law" in Thucydides' account of the civil wars (III.82.6; cf. II.53.4) and to the gods in the dialogue between the Melians and the Athenians are the most important or the most revealing statements occurring in his work as far as the gods are concerned. It is all the more necessary to realize that the theology of the Melian dialogue is in one sense of subordinate importance; the subject is brought up by the Athenians as it were in passing. In order to show the Athenians that they may have some hope against hope, the Melians remind them of the role played in war by chance: they trust, as far as chance is concerned, that "the divine" (*to theion*) will not disadvantage them, given the justice of the Melians—to say nothing of the fact that the Spartans are forced by sheer shame to come to the Melians' assistance. The Athenians reply that they, the Athenians, can count on the good will of "the divine," for they act within the limits of what human beings hold or believe regarding "the divine," for the Athenians (or all sensible human beings) believe as regards "the divine" what is generally thought about it and as regards the human they know clearly, namely, that the strong rules the weaker by nature and hence sempiternally with necessity. Thereupon the Melians drop the subject and speak only of their manifest or human hopes, i.e., the hope which they derive from their relation with Sparta. We note that in the Melian dialogue "the gods" are not mentioned but only "the divine," which is more general and more vague than "the gods." Of "the divine law" as distinguished from "the divine," Thucydides speaks in his own name; but he is in the case of the divine law, as in that of the divine, equally silent about the precise meaning of the expressions. He clearly disapproves of breaches of the divine law, whereas he refrains from passing judgment on the Athenians' theology as stated by their ambassadors on Melos.

Books VI and VII, which contain Thucydides' account of the Sicilian expedition, are related to the Melian dialogue as his account of the plague is to his Pericles' Funeral Speech. In his archaeology of Sicily he indicates the untrustworthy character of what is said about the Kyklopes and others (2.1–2). The first great event pertaining to the Sicilian expedition is the exchange of speeches, quoted by Thucydides, between Nikias and Alkibiades in the Athenian Assembly; there are two such speeches by Nikias and one by Alkibiades. In what could seem to be, especially in retrospect, a reversal of roles Nikias warns the Athenians against endangering what they possess for the sake of immanifest and future things (9.3), just as the Athenians had warned the Melians; there is this difference that the Melians were not, or at least not in the same way as the Athenians, in love with the

faraway (13; cf. 24.3). But Nikias is not equal to Alkibiades in dexterity; he is defeated in the debate, in a way that resembles Nikias' (or his comrades') defeat by Kleon in the debate regarding Pylos. Neither Nikias nor Alkibiades mentions gods but Alkibiades refers to the oath which obliges the Athenians to come to the assistance of their Sicilian allies (18.1; cf. 19.1). Nikias' last word is to the effect that the fate of the expedition will depend on chance, which cannot be mastered by men, rather than on human foresight (23.3). While the expedition is being prepared according to the proposal of the sensible and hitherto always lucky Nikias, unknown individuals mutilate the Hermai which stand in front of private houses as well as temples; this and other impious deeds are regarded as a bad omen for the expedition and even for the established democratic regime; a strong suspicion falls on Alkibiades and quite a few others. In spite of this Alkibiades is left together with Nikias in command of the expedition; the Athenians have the greatest hope for future things as compared with what they already possessed (31.6). This hope was not unconnected with piety; when everything was ready for the departure of the armament, the customary prayers and libations were offered (32.1–2). As little as in the debate in the Athenian Assembly are the gods mentioned in the debate in the Syracusan Assembly. It is hard to say whether this silence is one of the shadows cast by the unsolved mystery of the mutilation of the Hermai and similar impieties.

The considerable disappointment which the Athenians with the exception of Nikias (46.2) experienced after their arrival in Sicily proves to be minor compared with the recall to Athens of Alkibiades who is now to be proceeded against on account of his alleged impiety. The action of the Athenian *demos* against Alkibiades enables or forces Thucydides to tell the true story of the alleged tyrannicide committed by Harmodios and Aristogeiton. We note in particular two things: the tyranny of Peisistratos and his family was on the whole mild and law-abiding and in particular pious; Hippias, the man who was in fact tyrant after the death of his father, Peisistratos, survived and after his expulsion a few years later from Athens by the Spartans and some Athenians found refuge with the Persian king and fought on the Persian side at Marathon (54.5–6, 59.4), thus foreshadowing in a manner the fate of Themistokles.

In the first battle, Nikias defeats the Syracusans after having encouraged his troops by reminding them of their military superiority to the enemy: the enemy army is inferior to Nikias' army in regard to knowledge (68.2, 69.1). There is no need for him to refer to gods and hence he does not refer to them. This is perfectly compatible with the fact that in both armies the soothsayers bring the usual sacrifices prior to the battle (69.2). The battle was accompanied by a thunderstorm and heavy rain—phenomena which increased the fear of those who had no previous battle experience while the more experienced men simply regarded them as a consequence of the season

of the year (70.1): experience diminishes the frightening effect of the daimonic things. Any discouragement which the Syracusans may have suffered on account of their defeat is removed by a speech of Hermokrates in their Assembly which Thucydides reports and which is not encumbered by an explicit reference to gods (72). Hermokrates is also the speaker for Syracuse in a gathering at Kamarina in which both belligerents sue for the favor of those Sicilians who have not yet taken sides; the speaker for Athens carries the characteristic name Euphemos. Both speeches are quoted and are silent on the gods. In a gathering of the anti-Athenian cities at Sparta Alkibiades succeeds in convincing the Spartans of the soundness of a broadly conceived anti-Athenian policy and strategy and at the same time of the perfect correctitude of his high treason. Alkibiades' speech is also quoted and is silent on the gods; its being quoted and its being silent on the gods have the same reason. While the Spartan and Korinthian relief force is already on its way to Syracuse, the situation of the Athenians on Sicily looks quite favorable: Nikias is quite hopeful. Yet the only mishap which befell the Spartans was that they had to interrupt a military operation which they had started against Argos, because of an earthquake (95.1). As it seems to me, Book VI, which is rich in quoted speeches, also abounds in reported speeches.

Book VII can be said to bring the *peripeteia*: the leadership in the fight for Syracuse shifts from the Athenian gentleman Nikias with his half-Spartan turn of mind to the much more daring commanders Gylippos of Sparta and Hermokrates of Syracuse (cf., e.g., 3.3 and 8.3). The Athenians' situation in Sicily becomes grave; Nikias is compelled to send a letter to Athens with an urgent request for additional troops and supply. Apart from the fact that the letter was accompanied by oral messages, it has the status of a quoted speech (8.1–2, 10–15) to a greater degree than the excerpts from the letters of Pausanias and Themistokles to the king of Persia (I.129.3, 137.4). Nikias does not hesitate to tell the Athenians what he thinks of their "difficult natures" (VII.14.2 and 4). The reversal of fate which has taken place in Sicily resembles that at Pylos: while Athens has ceased to be the preponderant naval power, the anti-Athenian combination's naval power has increased (11.2–4, 12.3). Gods and the sacred things are not mentioned—at least not explicitly. For the greatest increase in the Spartans' power was caused by their holding now among other things that the Athenians had broken the treaty, whereas in the first war it had rather been the Spartans who had begun the war; the Spartans therefore believed that their misfortunes in the first war, like that at Pylos, were deserved or reasonable (cf. 18.2); they believed that good or bad fortune in war depends on the justice or injustice of the belligerents, i.e., on the rule of gods concerned with justice. This thought is ascribed by Thucydides to the Spartans, but it is no accident that it follows almost immediately his quotation of Nikias' letter; it is also a Nikian thought.

The operations urgently recommended by Alkibiades begin to hurt the Athenians considerably, although for the time being the harm which Athens suffered was as nothing compared with what happened to the small city of Mykalessos at the hands of Thracian mercenaries who were in the pay of Athens and whom the Athenians had to send home for fiscal reasons. Thereafter through an improvement in their naval tactics the Syracusans defeat the Athenians unmistakably in a naval battle; this was the turning point (41). Yet for the moment the Athenians' situation seems to be greatly improved by the arrival of the second Athenian expeditionary force that is commanded by Demosthenes. Demosthenes' daring attempt either to win a victorious decision practically at once or else to start at once with the preparation for the return home of the Athenian armament is spoiled in the first place by enemy resistance. Secondly, there is disagreement among the Athenian commanders and within the army: there seems to be no longer any hope. Demosthenes voted for immediate return to Athens. In the deliberations Nikias could not be as frank as Demosthenes since he was engaged in secret negotiations with the influential, wealthy Syracusans, who desired as much as he a speedy end of the enormously expensive war; he still has some hope. He voted therefore against Demosthenes' proposal. The reason by which he supported his vote was what he thought of the difficult nature of the Athenians: the very soldiers who clamor now for the immediate return to Athens will say after their return, when they have come again under the influence of the demagogues, that the Athenian generals have been bribed by the enemy: he for one would not prefer to perish unjustly at the hands of the Athenians rather than perishing at the hands of the enemy "privately," i.e., not unjustly. He does not consider the fact that his unjust death would contribute to the salvation of the Athenian armament. The exchange between Demosthenes and Nikias (47–49.3) is the most striking example in Thucydides' work of an exchange of reported speeches. Nikias' speech, though, does not simply express his thought since, as Thucydides makes clear, his hope prevents him from being completely frank. He clings to his opinion because he is swayed by hope based on his Syracusan connections rather than by fear of Athenian revenge, and his opinion wins out. The postponement of the Athenians' departure is due entirely to him. But at the time everything was ready for the departure of the whole armament by sea, an eclipse of the moon took place. Thereupon most of the Athenians and not the least Nikias himself, who was somewhat too much addicted to divination and the like, demanded further postponement of the departure: Nikias decided that according to the interpretation given by the soothsayers one ought not even to deliberate about the date of leaving before three times nine days had passed (50.4).

In the meantime the Syracusans gained a splendid naval victory, thus almost closing to the Athenians the exit from the harbor of Syracuse. The

Athenians' discouragement increased correspondingly and still more their regret about the whole expedition. Before they make a last desperate effort to break the Syracusan blockade, Nikias calls all soldiers under his command together and addresses to them a speech in which he shows them there is still hope, given the power of chance especially in war. Nikias' speech is paralleled by a speech of the enemy commanders to their troops: they have much better grounds for hope whereas the Athenians are reduced to putting their reliance altogether on fate (61–68). In these speeches, both of which are quoted, gods and sacred things are not mentioned, but the extreme danger in which the Athenians find themselves induces Nikias to address every single commander of a trireme and remind him, among other things, of the ancestral gods (69.1–2). The battle which follows and which consisted in the futile attempt of the Athenians to achieve a breakout through the blockading enemy navy was of unrivaled violence. The Athenians who could not embark were compelled to be spectators of the life-and-death struggle. Their participation was limited to their passionate response to the part of the fight which they could see from the place where each happened to stand: when they saw their own men vanquish the enemy, they caught courage and called on the gods; in the opposite case, they lost their courage and apparently also their willingness to call on the gods (71.3). Hope ceasing, piety ceases (cf. also 75.7). The Athenians' disaster prevents them from taking the customary loving care of their many dead, even from asking the victors for the surrender of the Athenian corpses (72.2): the contrast with the circumstances in which Perikles delivered his Funeral Speech is overpowering. Retreat into the interior of Sicily is rendered difficult and eventually impossible by a ruse of Hermokrates to which he was forced to have recourse because the Syracusans refused to continue fighting during the night: they just happened to celebrate a festival in honor of Herakles (73.2–74). Thucydides has described the miserable end of the Athenian army and its commanders—an event which surpasses description—as adequately as possible.

Shortly before the very end Nikias addressed a speech of encouragement to his troops which is quoted by Thucydides in full and which is the last speech quoted in full that occurs in the work. Nikias, still filled with hope, exhorts his soldiers to be hopeful. He declares truthfully that he is rather worse off than his comrades in arms although he has fulfilled the customary duties toward the gods and has always been just and modest towards human beings. The Athenians may have provoked the envy of the god by their expedition but they have been sufficiently punished for this; now they deserve the god's pity rather than his envy (77.1–4). Nikias' theology obviously differs from—nay, is opposed to—the theology stated by the Athenian ambassadors on Melos. According to Thucydides himself Nikias would have deserved a better fate than the one which fell to his lot, for he

had applied himself more than any other of Thucydides' contemporaries to the exercice of that virtue which is praised and held up by the law (86.5)—as distinguished from another, possibly higher, kind of virtue—but his theology is refuted by his fate. It is almost unnecessary to say that the Athenians' hopeless retreat into the interior of Sicily was accompanied by thunderstorms and rain which, while being seasonal, were interpreted by the Athenians as pointing to misery still to come (79.3).

Thucydides' theology—if it is permitted to use this expression—is located in the mean (in the Aristotelian sense) between that of Nikias and that of the Athenian ambassadors on Melos.

Book VIII, the last Book is anticlimactic. What this expression means depends obviously on the character of the climax, i.e., in the first place on the character of Books VI–VII and then of the whole work. It has been plausibly suggested that the peculiarity of Book VIII is due to its incompleteness, perhaps to Thucydides having died before he was able to complete his work. But this is not more than a plausible hypothesis. The peculiarity of Book VIII must be understood in the light of the peculiarity or peculiarities of the bulk of the work. The most striking peculiarity of the bulk of the work is the speeches of the characters which are quoted in full and the way in which they are interwoven with the account of the deeds as well as with the speeches which are merely reported. There are no speeches quoted in full to be found in Book VIII. There is however a large section of Book V which has the same character: V.10–84. The absence of quoted speeches from this section heightens the power, the impact, of the dialogue on Melos (V.85–112) and the account of the Sicilian expedition (VI–VII). Is that power, that impact, not still more heightened by the absence of fully quoted speeches from Book VIII? Let this question also not be more than a plausible hypothesis. It has at least the merit of protecting us against the danger of mistaking a plausible hypothesis ratified by an overwhelming majority for a demonstrated verity.

Since the Athenians and their enemies preserve their turns of mind—their zealous quickness and their cautious slowness, respectively—despite what happened in Sicily, the Athenians were able to build up a new powerful force and to protect the largest part of their empire. Their initial anger when they learned of their disaster in Sicily was directed also against the diviners and soothsayers who had confirmed them in their hope that they would conquer Sicily. But the long-range reaction was rather in favor of thrift and moderation and of some form of rule by older men. One may doubt, however, whether any effort on the part of the Athenians would have been of any avail to them if there had not been frictions or dissensions among her enemies. Owing to Alkibiades' instigation an important part of Attika was under permanent occupation by an enemy army commanded by the Spartan king Agis, and Agis was or became a mortal enemy of Alkibiades. Owing to

his command of a Spartan army Agis' power in Sparta had increased and he had thus increased or aroused dissensions with the other Spartan authorities. Alkibiades therefore had to depend on the support of these other Spartan authorities (5.3–4, 12.2, 45.1). But it was another division within the enemy combination which saved Athens and—incredible as it may sound—by the same stroke Alkibiades, who was condemned to death by Athens. The Athenian defeat in Sicily had made the king of Persia (and therewith his satrap Tissaphernes) and the Spartans the actual or potential heirs to that part of the Athenian empire which was located in Asia Minor and the islands nearby. Tissaphernes wished to use those rich financial resources, which were hitherto at Athens' disposal, for the king's services. This state of things naturally led to a Spartan-Persian alliance that was strongly urged by Alkibiades. While the war continued with more or less its old fury, the *demos* of Samos rose with the help of the Athenians against their oligarchic fellow-citizens, killing or expelling them and confiscating their property (21). Furthermore, the war still dragging on, the Peloponnesians felt that their treaty with Tissaphernes gave them less than they were entitled to expect; accordingly, a new treaty of alliance between the two powers was concluded. A change in the Spartan command brought the latent conflict between Sparta and Persia into the open. The Spartans who were now negotiating with Tissaphernes found it unbearable that the two treaties between Sparta and Persia restored to the king of Persia the right to all countries which he and his ancestors ever possessed, i.e., above all the Greek lands which Greeks had liberated from Persian domination. Tissaphernes became angry and was unwilling to continue paying the large sums of money which he had spent hitherto for the Peloponnesian navy. Precisely at this moment Alkibiades saw himself compelled to take refuge with Tissaphernes in order to find protection against his numerous and powerful enemies in Sparta. He took resolutely the side of Tissaphernes against the Spartans. He became the teacher of Tissaphernes is all things—especially regarding moderation: Tissaphernes ought to reduce the pay of the Peloponnesian sailors, whose high pay induces them to commit every kind of mischief and to ruin their bodies (45.1–2). Alkibiades, who was notorious for his *hybris* and incontinence, as teacher of moderation and continence: if this is not the greatest or most moving *peripeteia* recorded in Thucydides' work, it is surely the most astounding one. What an ancient critic observed with regard to Thucydides' account of the Kylon affair (I.126.2ff.)—here the lion laughed—can be applied with at least equal right to Alkibiades' timely conversion.

Politically the most important instruction which Alkibiades gave to Tissaphernes was to prevent the victory of either the Peloponnesians or the Athenians: a divided Greece could easily be controlled by Persia. If Persia had to make a choice between the two Greek powers she ought to prefer

Athens, which constituted less of a danger to Persia than the Peloponnesians. In this way Alkibiades prepared at the same time his reconciliation with the Athenians. For he held that the Athenians might turn to him if Tissaphernes appeared to be his friend. But this solution required the change of the Athenian regime from a democracy into an oligarcy: the Persian king could not be expected to put any reliance on a democracy. Very influential Athenians were won over to the plan to recall Alkibiades and to abolish the democracy. The popular opposition to the plan was silenced by the hope for the pay which the Persian king would give. Connected with Alkibiades' conspiracy but to some extent independent of it, there developed an anti-democratic conspiracy among the highest strata of the Athenian army on Samos, with the consequence that that army as a whole favored the abolition of democracy and the recall of Alkibiades. The Athenians on Samos sent an embassy to Athens with Peisandros as its leader. There was considerable opposition in Athens to the recall of Alkibiades, not the least on the ground of the fact that he had been condemned to death because of impiety. Yet the opponents were unable to suggest an alternative which might save Athens. Thereupon Peisandros told them clearly "there is none" except to make the government more oligarchic (53.3). This utterance of Peisandros—roughly six lines—is the only direct speech quoted in Book VIII. This does not necessarily mean that it is the most important utterance of a Thucydidean character that occurs in the last Book. But it clearly underlines, especially if taken in conjunction with the absence of any quoted speech by Alkibiades, the most striking characteristic of that Book: its anticlimatic character, as previously explained. One might also note the relative abundance of fully quoted treaties of alliance (18, 37, 58) as contrasted with the complete absence of fully quoted speeches proper.

The oligarchically minded Athenians other than Alkibiades, if not altogether inimical to him, established an oligarchy in Athens and wherever else they could in the Athenian empire. But the allies or subjects of Athens were less eager for oligarchy than for being independent of Athens. The regime now established in Athens was the government of 5,000 who were most able to help the city by their property and by themselves. This meant in fact that only members of the oligarchic clique were entitled to participate in the government and exercised a violent rule. At Peisandros' proposal the actual government was vested in 400 men out of the 5,000. The establishment of this regime in Athens was a remarkable achievement, the work of some of the most able and excellent Athenians. The oligarchic rulers naturally fortified their rule by prayers and sacrifices to the gods (70.1). They changed many of the provisions made under the democracy but they did not recall the men who had been exiled in order not to be forced to recall Alkibiades in particular. They tried to start negotiations with Agis; peace with Sparta rather than with Tissaphernes was their aim. But they achieved

nothing. In addition, the Athenian army on Samos put down the oligarchy there. The democratic leaders obliged the soldiers and especially the oligarchically minded among them by the greatest oaths to accept the democracy and continue the war against the Peloponnesians (75.2). They were in favor of Alkibiades' recall and its implication: alliance with the King of Persia. This proposal was adopted by the Assembly of the soldiers on Samos, with the result that Alkibiades joined the Athenians on that island. He addressed a speech to that Assembly which Thucydides reports and which overstated the case for Alkibiades and his policy as strongly as possible (81.2–3). Thereupon he was elected general to serve together with the previous ones. He was now in a position to frighten the Athenians with his alleged or true influence on Tissaphernes and Tissaphernes with his power over the Athenian army. It was in this grave situation that Alkibiades seemed for the first time to have benefited his fatherland no less than any other man by preventing an ill-conceived attempt of the Athenians on Samos to leave that island and to sail straight into the Peiraeus. In fact there was at that time no one apart from him as capable to restrain the multitude. He abolished the rule of the 400 while preserving or rather restoring the rule of the 5,000. Just at this time, while the sharpest civic conflict raged in Athens, the Athenians suffered a severe naval defeat in the closest proximity to the city; the situation was graver even than immediately after the disaster on Sicily. But they showed again their old courage and resilience. The rule of the 5,000, i.e., the rule of the hoplites, was firmly established. Then the Athenians had for the first time during Thucydides' life a good regime: a right kind of mixture of oligarchy and democracy. Simultaneous with this salutary revolution Alkibiades was formally recalled (96–97) and therewith the hope for Athens' salvation restored. The hope came to nought, as other hopes spoken of by Thucydides had come to nought, but not through Alkibiades' fault. How it came to nought is told by Xenophon in the *Hellenika*. There seems to be a connection, not made explicit by Thucydides, between the first good Athenian regime that existed during Thucydides' lifetime and Alkibiades' unquestioned predominance.